

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #463-2

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

December 8, 1992

Honolulu, O`ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Nu`uanu, Honolulu, Hawai`i, on December 8, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay for today's interview, I'm going to start off with when and where you were born.

AC: I was born in Honolulu on June 9, 1925.

MK: What number child are you in the family?

AC: I am number five of the living, but my mother, when she came out here had six children, so I'm actually number six.

MK: And how many sisters and brothers do you have?

AC: The eldest is a boy, and then another boy, and then two sisters. Then there was this one boy that passed away, just above myself, and then myself. So (there are) two boys and three girls, three sisters.

MK: Okay. And, you know, from what you've been told, where was your first family home in Honolulu?

AC: The only thing I can remember is that my mother used to tell me that we were living across from Likelike School - I forgot the name, Palama Street or someplace around there. She used to tell us that I was a smart kid. She says, if she remembers correctly, I must have been just about little over a year (when) I would walk to the store and I would buy butter and come home. So my little sisters, we all say, "Oh, can't be."

But she says if she remembers correctly, she said that's what she thought that I was very smart at that time.

From there we went on to the next place. I kind of very vaguely remember

(it, it was) Akepo Lane. I remember because I (can) visualize the area which is now Dillingham Boulevard. We lived right above Dillingham Boulevard and I remember seeing a grassy [area]. My brothers and sisters used to go down there and then they would talk about catching grasshoppers and frying them and then eating it.

I think the next time I remember very well is when I was at Lopez Lane, that's right back of Tamashiro Market now. We lived there, I remember the two-story building. We lived downstairs. Then just recently, several months ago, whenever I pass that Palama Street, I saw it torn down and then they put another structure on it. But anyway, from there we went to Pua Lane. I must have been around, in elementary school, maybe around six [*years old*], no, could be—maybe around older than that, around eight or so, I think, I must have moved there. Because my father passed away when I was nine and we were at Pua Lane and we stayed there. And I went to Ka`iulani School, first grade; second grade, at Robello [*Lane School*]. And then I went back to third grade at Ka`iulani until sixth grade. And then went on to Kal\_kaua [*Intermediate School*].

MK: You know, backing up a bit, you know, you mentioned living in a home that was near Likely School, then you went to Akepo Lane, then to Lopez Lane, then Pua Lane, yeah. Now, as far as you can remember, what do you remember about, say, the neighborhood around Akepo Lane, if you have any memories of that early, early period.

AC: The only thing I could remember was that in Akepo Lane, the house was sort of a green [*color*]. But I must have been very young, because I don't remember too much. I kind of remember that we had a stairway going up. (At) the entrance into that place, you had to go through a gate and a little alleyway. But that's all I could remember. The next time I remember vividly is when we were at Lopez Lane and going to Robello [*Lane*] School. I remember Robello School was two stories. And there was a water fountain up front. I remember we would all come downstairs and we would have to take cod-liver oil. We took our little teaspoon and cod-liver oil, and then, everybody, most all the time, either had orange or *see mui* to take the taste away. I remember that so well in that place. In that Lopez Lane area, another thing that I remember well, is we used to play on the stairway and I had this vaccination on my arm and I kept getting that thing scraped. So even up until today, I have this vaccination, it's really a scar because that scab fell off and then when it got scabbed again, fell off (again). And that's the place where my father was ill. My father had taken different remedies over there, like that melon, and then the dog. I remember we had the kerosene stove and then we have my mother putting that fish, live fish, into that pot. So those are the memories I have over there.

MK: You know, in that Lopez Lane area, who were the people that lived over there?

AC: I can remember our next-door neighbor, this girl (from) a Hawaiian family.

They must have been kind of well-off because it was a 5,000 square feet [lot]. They had a nice home, and I know her name was Lovey Kalau. In fact, I still know that family, my sister knows them well because one of the girls goes to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. But they used to live there, and then we had another family called Toda. The fellow was (a) very good friend (of) my brother. There was another family called Han that lived further in the lane. Naturally, we had this family that was upstairs of us. I don't know them that well, but I know of them, they were the Whangs. The mother didn't like the husband's family or something, and when he died, she changed the kids' (family) name to Chun. And then the other family upstairs of us, Korean family, I still know them. Etta and the girls were Betty and Mary. I still get to see them once in a while.

MK: And what was the last name of that particular family?

AC: That was Kim.

MK: And at that Lopez Lane home, were you all renting? The Whang family, the Kim family, your family?

AC: It was all rentals. It was a rental. In fact there was another Chinese family that lived over there, I think, next door or upstairs, I'm not sure. But I still remember them. Lillian and Dorothy, I think. I believe it was Chang (or Ching), if I'm not mistaken. In fact, one of the (boys), Ernest, worked on Ford Island when I was there, so I used to get to see him.

MK: And since . . .

AC: And Palama, that street, there was a store right (there) facing Lopez Lane, and that store was a Chinese-owned store. (The owner's) name was Chang. (Elsie Chang, a daughter, is a savings and loan company executive.) I remember that very well.

MK: And since all these families were renting the upstairs and downstairs, would you know who the landlord was, or landlord family?

AC: No, I don't know who it was for that area.

MK: And then, among all of these families, how were relations? You know, was it a tight-knit community or just a place that you folks had to come home to eat and sleep and play, or what was it like, the neighborhood?

AC: I think for us, during that time, I only can relate to it as a place to come home to eat and sleep and play with the kids, that's all. I don't know anything more about how the neighborhoods were. My parents were busy and my father wasn't [in] good [health]; my mother, I think she went to work at the cannery while we were there also. I also remember she was taking in sewing from the tailors at that time, that were located on the base at Fort Shafter. I think they had many ready-mades for the soldiers, but many of them didn't want to

wear ready-made, so they would go to the tailor and they would be fitted. Then the (tailors) would cut these trousers and shirts and my mother would sew. I think my mother was sewing trousers only. But later on, when my sister was in the eighth grade, my mother pulled her out from school and she [*Agnes Chun's sister*] went to learn the trade at the Fort Shafter tailors. She learned how to sew shirts. She was very creative, I think, because right now she does beautiful handwork. She sews all her clothes. In fact she even makes (my) shorts and blouses and clothes. She makes these beautiful appliques. She lives in California now, so I told her, "Gee, if you were living out here, you could make a lot of money going to these craft fairs." Beautiful handwork.

MK: So she started sewing way back when, when your mother used to sew trousers on a piecemeal basis . . .

AC: Right, piecemeal.

MK: . . . for the Korean tailors at Fort Shafter.

AC: That's right. Eventually my brother graduated from high school and he also went into that tailoring business. So he worked for [*tailors*] and learned how to sew. He was very good also. He eventually went to Pearl Harbor to work, that was before the war [*World War II*] started. He got a job at Pearl Harbor in the sail loft, sewing. They do repairs to upholstery and all those sewing things. So he was—they call that sail loft, I guess, I'm not sure, yeah.

MK: So both of your siblings kind of learned their early trade through your mom?

AC: Right.

MK: And so your mom was working at the pineapple cannery and taking in sewing. And your father was not well. So in terms of, say, a neighborhood life, they seemed to be preoccupied with other things.

AC: That's right.

MK: And for the children, you mentioned that you folks would come home and . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . play. What did the neighborhood children do for play at Lopez Lane?

AC: I don't remember too well what we did there, all I could remember is that running upstairs and downstairs on the stairway, and nothing more. But I remember at Pua Lane, I was so very upset all the time. We played five-hole marble, and my sister or my mother would call me to pick up the laundry from the line or send me to the stores down on King Street for an errand. I used to get so upset when they would interrupt. We would also play

hopscotch. We would put all these pins, safety pins together to make that *kini* right? Another game that we played was *peewee*. We had (a) very small space for yard there, hardly anything. There were six homes enclosed in this area. Just in between the two buildings would be about ten to fifteen feet. And then we'd play in that dirt area. And then another time what we would do is play what they call [stilts], you get your empty cream cans and then we would go into the bushes someplace down by Kanoa Street, and then they have this plant, very prickly with *kuku*. I don't know what it is, but when you pick the bean, and it's green, you peel it and there's this glue-like thing, and then you would put it on the can and then we'd make holes where the holes were. We'd tie with the string and poke it in and then we'd make a long handle. We'd hold onto it with our two feet on the cans and walk, and things like that.

And then they'd have slingshot (made from) rubber tires. We would cut them in little strips and we'd play slingshot. We played boys' games too. See, Palama Settlement was close by, so we would go to Palama Settlement. As far as Palama Settlement was concerned, they had a swimming pool and the kids would go Saturday morning. Early in the morning, they'd have the tank empty and they'd have just very little water, then kids would learn how to swim there. I went several times and I never got to learn how to swim [very well]. I was very afraid of the water.

At one time, Palama Settlement, I remember, had a big gym. In the gym, they would have lessons. We would have tap dancing, hula dancing, and things like that. And then, I think once a year, they would have (a) sort of carnival. Everybody would perform, they would have clowns. The kids that go there for lessons would perform. I remember that.

I still remember the shower room that they had. I'd go to swim and other kids (would) dive in, but I never, never learned how, so I couldn't dive in. All I knew how to do was hold my nose and jump in the water, and swim from corner to corner, that's about it. Later, they had a library, and they had a lady (librarian), I remember her so well. She was a tall, skinny, *Haole* lady. And I think her name was Matthews or Matheson. I still remember her. We used to go to the library.

MK: And what did that *Haole* lady do over there?

AC: At the library?

MK: Mm hm.

AC: She would be the one to check in (and check) out the books.

MK: And all those lessons at Palama Settlement, were they free to the children of Palama?

AC: Free, I don't remember paying—maybe we paid something, but I hardly remember. Maybe membership, I'm not sure, but all I remember is we were all there, swimming. In other words, that was the rec center for kids. Nowadays, they make special rec centers for these kids and that was our rec center. I still remember some of the people that (went) to swim there. They had swimming meets, and we'd go and watch. I remember the men were on the *`Ewa* side shower room and we were on the *Waikiki* side of the pool.

MK: You know, besides the swimming lessons, did you take part in all the other kinds of lessons that were offered?

AC: I took a little tap dancing, I remember, but I never performed. I was very inconsistent, I never wanted to be part of that kind of situation, so I never did.

MK: So at Pua Lane, when you were a kid, you folks had a kind of like a free play . . .

AC: (Yes.)

MK: . . . play with that side, and then you went to P\_lama Settlement. Were there any other things happening in the neighborhood, say, among the parents?

AC: Well, you know, during that Pua Lane time, I grew up, I went to Kalakaua [Intermediate School]. When we were going to Kalakaua, I would catch the streetcar. You remember that little thing that runs around now, that (Waikiki tour streetcar), that colorful one. It looks like that, the streetcar. We rode that, and then later on the trolley came along. I remember, I think, it must have been five-cents fare. We would try to save money and use that carfare for goodies. So from Pua Lane, I used to walk to Kalakaua on Kalihi Street, and come back. The only time I'd ride it, usually, was when I'm late for school, then I'd ride it. But then I remember that, (at) Kalakaua, they sold cookies. They had this beautiful oatmeal and chocolate cookie. And they (were) big, about the size of your palm. I really don't remember how much it was, but it must have been (a) nickel, or three for a quarter, or something like that. But anyway, I always liked (those) cookies, I never had enough of (those). So one day I was thinking to myself when I saw the *Star-Bulletin*, I think they have this editor in the food section that (takes) requests for recipes. I often told myself, "Gee, I wonder if I should write and find out if somebody's got that recipe for (those) oatmeal cookies and the chocolate cookies."

I'm sure I can find lot of chocolate and oatmeal cookies, right, but it's just the idea that (I) identify (the cookies with) that school. I always think about that.

MK: You mentioned that you would save your five-cents fare to get goodies. Besides those cookies that you'd get at school, where else did you spend your money?

AC: When we were in elementary school, I think I mentioned we went to library. We went to the main library. We would walk from Pua Lane to the main library. And as we go along, we would come to this place called Yuen Chong [Co.], on Maunakea [Street], corner of Maunakea, I believe, and King Street. Well, it was on King Street [83 North King Street], this Chinese grocery store (that sold) sundry items. That's where we used to stop by and you know all the seeds were all in boxes. (There were) all kinds of cracked seed, (including) whole plums and football (seeds). All those things. (The seeds were put into) those small little brown bags, and we would buy (those for) five cents. It's almost three-quarters of that bag (of seeds) for a nickel. I believe that my mother used to give me five dollars to deposit, once a month, in my brother's savings account. I think it was either Honolulu Savings or whatever, on King Street, close to Fort Street. Then I'd go on to the library. On the library grounds, there was this tree. I don't know what it is, but it's where that `Iolani Palace is. This big tree with leaves, big flat leaves, (had) these little fruits or seeds. We would pick that up and I swear the kids were eating that. I vaguely remember that, that's what we used to do every Saturday, almost anyway. That was what our pastime was.

And then going to the Palama Theater. When I was at Lopez Lane I remember my sister taking me to Palama Theater. I remember that distinctly. We would go out there in the morning on Saturday and look at those, what do you call those/

MK: Marquee?

AC: (Yes.) They have outside (the theater), you know, (posters) of what was coming. We'd go there. And then once in a while, this was when I was (at) Pua Lane, I think, the Pua Lane, I think, the Palama Theater would have free movies for kids. On Saturday they would have (movies featuring) Flash Gordon, or Buck Rogers. Those series. Right after school, sometimes they would have free movies for the kids. I think I told you about this Chandu. One time when I went there, they had this movie, *Chandu*, (about) Chandu the magician. I swear when I looked at the picture, they had this car driving down this driveway into this home, stopped in front of the home, and then this invisible figure would open the door. And that room was misty, fog-looking. I was so scared. I don't know why. When I think back, I thought it was so silly. I was so scared, I couldn't finish the movie. I only remember that scene, and I came home. I remember my sister taking me to the movie. And one time there

was a movie called

*She*. That's another movie that scared me to death. Until today, when I watch (that) movie it's kind of scary; (when it's) on television, I walk away or I just close my eyes.

Anyway, those were the things that we did when we were growing up (that) I could remember.

MK: And in that Pua Lane area, who were the kids that you played with?

AC: Oh (yes)! Well, (at) Pua Lane we had many kids—in fact, let me see—one, two, three, four—all the families that were living there had children. And there was only one Japanese family, the Fukudas, Hazel, George, Mabel, and Mildred. I still remember, they're much older than I am. Hazel was, maybe, about two, three years older than I was, but the rest were older. (The other families) were Koreans and we stayed there a long time. There were two, four, six homes lined up. We started in the back, which was a duplex, and then we moved up to the bigger house. After the war, we moved up to the front (home), my mother (and I). So I was very close friends with most of the kids there. There was one house that was kind of transient. People didn't stay in there too long, but I remember the Dunns, the Yangs living there. I remember the Kims in the back, they were there long time, and we moved out before they moved. And then (in) the house in the back, we had the Kwons, and then we had Lees. Actually it was Martha Lee with her husband, Tai Sung Kim. I remember—who else were there? That's just about it, I think, and then we moved out.

MK: You know, I'm kind of curious as to why is it that there were five Korean families congregated in one area. Was it by coincidence or . . .

AC: No, it—no.

MK: . . . how did it happen that way?

AC: No, you see, because, I think, at that time—well, you know, like I told you, up to Kaimuki, was a developed area. Beyond that was the pig farms. And Kahala, in other words, wasn't existing yet as a residential (area), so people were living between Kaimuki and Kalihi. This Pua Lane area, Kanoa Street, up to Dillingham [*Boulevard*], there were stores, and lot of Koreans, I can name (many) Koreans that were living (there). There were several Koreans, there was a laundry run by Koreans, a furniture store (operated by) two sets of people, (the) Whangs and the Parks. Next door was the dry cleaning shop, Adam Lee's dry cleaning shop. Then across the street was the Moon family. I think somebody said Jade Moon's dad (i.e., local TV newscaster's father) is Thomas, but I never did confirm that. But his mother and his family were living there, running a grocery store. Then there was another Kwon grocery store. Then there was another Shon, Isaiah Shon's mother was running a grocery store. There was also Ken Kwak—he's with the state (government), yeah, economics. Ken Kwak's grandmother had a grocery store. So we had a



lot of Koreans running stores over there.

Within Pua Lane, I remember the Shins living, the Shin family, Shin Hyung Jun. And we had Douglas Cho and his parents. His father was a barber. They were living in Pua Lane. I remember the Kims. (Victoria), I think her name was. Anyway, they were living in Pua Lane. On Kanoa Street, we had a whole bunch of Koreans. Rose Nishida, her mother was Kang, I believe. (The Kangs were) there, I remember. And then (near) the Korean church on Kanoa Street was Maruda and her husband, Kim Chang Soo. Then we had Charlie Choo. We had (a) Choo family there. Then we also had this Lee family, Henry Lee family. Then we also had another family called (Goo), Clara Kim Goo—you know Ah Chew Goo [*well-known basketball player and coach*]? His mother-in-law, Clara's parents, they lived on Kanoa Street too.

We (also) had this Marjorie, I forgot her name. But anyway, she's related to my very good friend, Jennie Lyum. They were living on Kanoa Street. Then come up this way up Pua Lane, I mean further up to our---see, Pua Lane was not a straight street at that time. (The lane) comes up Vineyard, makes a jog to your left, small jog, and then it (straightens out) and goes straight down to King Street. Right at that jog there was a store, and it was run by that Wah Kau Kong ('s family). He was killed (while) in the [*U.S.*] Air Force, I believe, a pilot. He was killed in the war. I know the Chinese family there, they were the Kong family. Right next, there was a Korean family, the Lee family. (Then) there was a little lane, I don't know (its) name, but there were many Koreans living in that lane also. There's (the) Elizabeth Kim family, and another lady. I can't remember her name, but I think they were (also) Kims. They lived there. There was a Choi family there. There was another lady called Sara Lee. She was an adopted daughter of this Moses Chung and his mother lived there with his adopted sister, Sara Lee. Sara Lee was the one who had a baby. So when I was fourteen [*years old*], I (borrowed) her social security card, or the cannery card (since I was then underage), and worked under (the assumed identity of) Sara Lee for three years.

Across the street of that Pua Lane, there was a two-story building, great, big building, and it was owned by this Chinese family. I know (it was the family of) Joyce Wong. She used to work with us on Ford Island too. Joyce's family (or her in-laws), I believe were the ones that owned that place. I don't know. But anyway, there was another Korean family that lived up there. It's a Kim family. I remember he was a postman, and I believe his daughter is or was one of the C.S. Wo designers.

MK: Furniture designer? Oh, interior decorator?

AC: Interior decorator, right. She had a very famous name, and I believe she married a *Haole* doctor. As you came up into Pua Lane, there was Lila Lee and her family. I remember, there was this Mrs. Song and her family. I remember them because I still see her grandson, Jeff Song. (Do) you know Abraham Song? They're all part of that whole Korean complex. Even on Vineyard Street you had Koreans living in Desha Lane. Next to Pua Lane,

further down this way was Desha Lane, and you had Koreans. Jimmy Koo and his family (were also there). In fact, I just contacted Jimmy and this sister Eliza because of the mother's picture bride situation, and I just talked with him. And their home is (located in) Desha Lane. And in Desha Lane, there was another family called Sara Lee also. You know, Sara and brother Colin and (sister) Barbara, that family lived in Desha. So it was a small world when you really come down to it and other Koreans I don't remember too well in that place, but they had Koreans living there. (Koreans also resided) on Liliha Street.

So I guess, when they settled, they settled around a Korean church and in the vicinity. So all along Liliha Street, they had Koreans living.

MK: I know that up on Liliha Street, there's the Korean Christian Church, right. And then you have St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which had a Korean congregation.

AC: Right, they were originally on Kanoa Street. Then they relocated up there, on Judd Street. Along Liliha Street, at one time, had many, many stores. Between Vineyard and Liliha, there was a drugstore, Korean drugstore. Across the street, on Liliha Street, there was this (Teuk Soon) Lyum family. Jennie Lyum's father-in-law had a grocery store over there. Coming up this way we had a Liliha Theater at the corner of School and Liliha. We had a Liliha Theater. Along that area, you had Koreans living also. Evangeline Hong, she lived there with her family and Helen Chung and her family lived over there. And Bob Ko, his mother ran a grocery store just right above Vineyard Street.

MK: So Palama, Liliha, there were a lot of Korean businesses?

AC: (Yes) and School Street.

MK: And homes?

AC: (Yes).

MK: And, you know, I'm wondering, you know, say in your situation where there were six homes in a cluster at Pua Lane was the landlord there?

AC: No. Harry Auld was his name.

MK: Oh, he wasn't Korean then?

AC: No, no, he owned that, Auld family owned that parcel. And next door to us was a parcel of land, maybe 5,000 square feet. But anyway, that parcel of land was (owned by) a Hawaiian family, Carl Saffery, I think was the name, if I'm not mistaken. We moved out from Pua Lane 1950 and went to Aupuni Street. That was when my mother-in-law told us to move in that house [*on Aupuni Street*] because she bought another place. So we moved into that

house because our Pua Lane (home) was going to be torn down eventually. But anyway, several years before they tore down that place, the Hawai`i Housing Authority took over, because they must have bought the land from Auld. He used to come around and collect rent. But then, when—in fact, the rent was—like the duplex was \$16.50, you know, in 1950, yeah. And the two, the four homes that were single cottages, \$17.50. And when the Hawai`i Housing Authority took over, I knew the lady who was working there, Anna (Pahk). She was a secretary. She asked me if I would collect rent. And I believe I was paid ten dollars, ten or fifteen dollars, to collect the rent, every month and take it down to their office, which was located on King Street in one of those buildings by the market, close to the market. I wonder if it was called the Graystone [Hotel] building. But anyway, I was collecting the money and taking it down there. And so I really---up until that time I left. So can you imagine, we were paying \$17.50, the max.

We had two bedrooms. All of the (homes) were two bedrooms, but the duplex bedrooms were smaller. Then there was one home in the center, the one we had lived (in), which was bigger than the other three. (We) had a double parlor, and then two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bath. I remember my father, he was very good with his hands. I would be so scared at that time (because) all the light fixtures were right in the center of the room. You have to go in and turn the switch right? I remember the Lopez Lane home had this toilet with that tank on the top, wooden tank on the top. And I would be so scared to go into the (bathroom).

MK: You were just saying that you were scared.

AC: Anyway, so what my father did (about the room lights) was he extended the electrical cord. I just put my hand around it, behind the wall, pull the string, and then I'd go in. And that happened to all the homes that we went into after that. He did all of it. And then so this was the back home and the center home. And then he passed away when we were in the center home. In fact, in that Pua Lane area, right next to the Chinese store, they had a little dirt road that ran from Vineyard Street up until that Chinese store. There were many, many homes in there too. There were Filipinos living there too. And then in that lane right next to the store, which was running parallel to the homes that we lived in, they had another group of Filipinos living in there too. And they would play music. And we always heard these Filipinos—that's why I'm so familiar with the Filipino music and I like it. And you had Japanese in there, (too). In fact, in that lane, in the corner or someplace, there was a Japanese temple or some kind of religious group that met in there. And then I don't remember too well. And in fact, I remember still this Japanese man would come around with (something that looked like a) big bag and you would give him maybe twenty-five cents and a bowl of rice, and he would puff the rice. We would have a big bag of (puff) rice. That was real fun. Then my mother would make those rice balls, melting the sugar. She knew how to do that and we'd eat that. That was so funny.

In Pua Lane too, we had a wagon. We had vendors that came in wagons.

There was one man that sold fish, right by the corner of Pua Lane and King Street. At that corner about two houses away, there was a saimin wagon (in a garage). They would (sell) saimin and they had a table and some benches (for the customers). The (owners) would be up on the wagon, they'd cook the saimin and we'd bring it down (to) the table and eat. It was the best saimin and *udon*. And then I remember this lady who used to live in that Pua Lane extension, in that lane way in the back. In fact, her home was close to the Vineyard Street. Then there was a Korean lady who ran a dressmaking shop. And there was a Korean-Japanese man, he used to drive a taxi. His name was Tanaka. (People) said he was a Korean man who was using a Japanese name because he came from Japan or something like that. Anyway, he was very good friends with the Koreans. And so this guy Tanaka was there. There was a grocery store, they sold fruits. And from there on it was all grassy—(with) some homes. They had some old homes along there. And then they had a good stretch of empty lot that ended up by that dirt road that (is) parallel to Pua Lane.

(There was a lady at the end of the) pathway through that bushes. And then her home was there, but actually you should really go around into her home. She and her husband, he was dealing in junks. He would push (a) cart, he would have a cart and he would go around and collect junk, rags mostly. She would be washing the rags, cleaning it, drying it, and then he would sell the rags, that was his living. But anyway, that lady, (was) very good friends with us. when I was [*small*] she would always take that little pail, that aluminum rice pail, the *bento* (container) with the two layers. She would take the bottom one, she'd take it to the saimin place and she'd buy me *udon*. She knew I liked *udon*. So anyway, I remember that saimin place so well. We used to have that.

And then there was this one man. He had that vending truck. My mother always bought papayas from him. He was coming around when we were living in Lopez Lane. My mother would buy papayas by the bushel, like. My mother had so much faith in papaya, she says it was a very good fruit. We always had papaya. Even up until the time when we moved to Pua Lane, the guy would come and then we would buy vegetables from him. This is how we remember that area.

MK: You know, did you folks also frequent the stores in the area, the Korean businesses and the Japanese?

AC: (Yes.) Every afternoon—we didn't have refrigerator, but we had that icebox, remember. So every morning we would have to take the ice in, wrap it up in this rice bag, put it into that icebox. Every night you have to empty the water. I remember we would have to empty that water into the *laua`e* basket. My father had a good reputation for making these *laua`e* baskets. So we would have several of those hanging. I remember going down to the market every day, almost every day. She would take me with her. So we'd go buy, and I remember she paying like thirty-five cents a pound for pork, pork shoulder. My mother always bought tenderloin, and she always called it

"tenderline." I don't know, my mother was really something and like I said once before, we always had this—in spite of us being so hard up, I grew up not wanting anything. My mother made *mandoo* all the time. We also had all the time, this boiled ham. And it's just like the ham that you find in the supermarket in the little packets, sliced ham. That's what it is. We used to eat that, you know. And then, so she'd buy tenderloin, she called that "tenderline." The markets over there sold this tofu. Tofu came in the five-gallon cans in the water. And when you want one, stick the hand in and dig it out. But no longer now because of sanitation. And then poi, poi was in a barrel. And the (storekeeper) had a paddle, you know, like a tennis paddle. (He'd) stick the paddle in and he would make (the pink market paper) into a cone, sprinkle water and then scoop up the poi and slop it in there, you know, just throw it in there. That's how we bought poi. And then, you know this tripe, it was so funny I always saw tripe black. It was black tripe. (They had) the big black tripe, and book tripe too. It was a funny thing, the big tripe, she would come home and then boil hot water and would just scald it quickly. Then she would get the knife and she would scrape (the black part) off. It was black but we would just slick it (off), right, and then we would eat it like that. Many, many years later, white (tripe became available). Now this is after the war, I believe, because that was when I started marketing, right? We used to do most of our marketing at Chun Hoon. I look in there and then I said, "Gee, what kind of tripe is that?"

And he (storeclerk) said, "Tripe."

I said, "Oh, but how come this is white, you don't have the black kind?"  
(Chuckles)

And the (clerk) told me, "Oh, it's the same kind, but we have to now sell it all cleaned out."

I couldn't believe it.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Before we stopped, we were talking about, you know, your family, your mom going out to buy tripe. And now we're just talking about Liliha and the Korean drugstore . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . and the vicinity. Can you kind of . . .

AC: Follow through on that.

MK: What was the name of that Korean drugstore?

AC: Okay. I thought I remembered it for a long time, but I forgot. It was an older Korean man [*Shon Do Kyun*]. If I talk to my brother, he probably might

remember. Around the corner was sort of like a dip, and behind, that's where this teacher—her name was Miss Nishi [*lived*], I remember so well. She was one of my teachers. A very thin lady, (with a) big grin when she smiles. She used to live there. And right beyond that area there—where the Mayor Wright [Homes] housing is—was where that gully, was. And right next to it was a fruit store. I think the name was Fujii Store. And then they had this beautiful display of fruits all the time. And that's where everybody went to buy. And then right next door to them had a drugstore, Japanese (Machida) drugstore. I noticed that whenever we used to pass there, I would look in the window because they had this display of different parts of the body that had sores or something, and it was cast into plaster or something. And (it was) real realistic. And so we'd always stop by and look at it. That's the thing I remember about the store.

Then you come on up towards Pua Lane. (On) the corner of this Desha Lane, they had a little store that was almost like Shimaya [*Shoten*]. And then right next to it was the meat market. And then, going up you had another meat market. Then I think there was a restaurant along the way. And then, the Korean vegetable store. Then you had another Korean, laundry lady. Then there was another little lane between the buildings. And then you had this *mochi* factory. And at one time there was a Chinese bakery, I remember. Another sort of like Shimaya store was there too. And long, long time ago they had a little soda fountain. I remember, I sure would like to eat hamburger, but never had money to buy hamburger. I always bought hot dog. There was a store like that. And in fact, even the (David) Kang (family) at one time had a grocery store over there too.

Across the street you had department store at the corner of Akepo Lane. Akepo Lane and King Street, there was a department store over there. I forgot what the name was. I remember going in there, buying some things. And then the old Palama Theater, next to it was a drugstore. I remember that drugstore so well. I used to go and buy that romance magazines for my sister. She would always send me down there (for other errands, too).

They had a little fountain over there, in that drugstore. I swear I remember eating this taro ice cream, made with taro. Oh, (it) was so good, I always wanted to eat that, but I never had enough of that. I've never seen any taro ice cream since then. But—and in fact, even next door to the drugstore was another (store) sort of like a department store. It was just adjacent to that Robello Lane. And then, one thing I remember about elementary school days was that right next to Ka'iulani School was a Japanese lunch store. I swear, that was the best hamburger I ever ate. I think they had a lot of filling, like bread. But the hamburger was so good. I've never eaten anything like that. He would have the hamburger bun with the hamburger, and instead of lettuce, sometimes they would put blanched bean sprouts.

MK: Oh?

AC: Bean sprouts would be in there, and mustard. And then, you know, bread

paper? I guess they must have gotten the bread paper in a roll from the bread store. Bread paper was cut in I'd say, one, two-inch, or three-inch strips, and that's what the hamburger was wrapped (with) and put into the bag.

MK: Oh.

AC: I remember that so well. I guess they would sell stew and rice too. At that time we didn't have plates. I mean, they may have paper plates, but it would come in that, you know, little *okazu* (paper containers)?

MK: Mm hm, the little . . .

AC: Those little cup-like things. That's what they put that stew and rice in there. I remember that so well. When I was going to work (at the Hawaiian Pineapple Co. cannery), when I was fourteen, I went second shift. You know, we took the second shift. I don't remember ever working morning shift. Second shift we'd start, sometimes 2:00, 2:30 [*P.M.*], or whatever. And then there would be always a radio program called, "*Hilltop House*." We would listen to that at about eleven o'clock. We'd listen to that and we'd go to work. Maybe sometimes they start at 1:30 [*P.M.*]. Right in that neighborhood, several of us girls, we go together. We wash our apron and cap every night. So we take that. Sometimes the caps, we don't clean it every night, but the aprons we had to. We'd carry our gloves and our aprons and go to work together. We'd come home together. We walked from home through Robello Lane and to the canneries, so was all right. So we really had a good time, working as a group. There (was) always somebody around there that we can play with. Every house had somebody, some kid. I still remember that.

MK: You know, backing up a little bit. You know, you mentioned like the Korean drugstore. I'm just curious, were the drugs in that Korean drugstore . . .

AC: Oh.

MK: . . . Korean, traditional . . .

AC: No.

MK: . . . or American drugs?

AC: I remember, he was an American drugstore. He may have Korean herbs, but I'm not sure. But he was a regular drugstore.

MK: And then, when you talked about the Korean-owned stores that, you know, were around P\_lama . . .

AC: Yeah.

MK: . . . were there any items in the stores that were, you know, specifically

brought in to cater to the Korean clientele, or just regular local goods?

AC: At that time, we didn't have what they call the real Korean items from Korea. They were not packaged or anything. The only thing I remember from Korea was, there was this man called Mr. Shin. (He) used to do importing from Korea. So once in a while, we'd have this *kim chee*, and (it'd) come in these big barrels, great big barrels. He'd have it on a truck, and we'd go out, my mother would go out and buy the *kim chee*, I never saw turnips that big. And this is what we see now, the Korean turnips. Big turnips like that. And that's what he used to sell, and the cabbage. By the time the cabbage *kim chee* came here, was real sour. But it was so well preserved that it wasn't rotting, you know, it was preserved. But anyway, I still remember that, and I just love that taste of it. But anyway, he was the one that was importing some things. And at that time, there (were) no health restrictions, I'm sure. He would bring in those, just like that *bagoong* thing for *kim chee*. My mother would buy.

But (for) grocery stores, I remember Mrs. Kwon used to run (one), and Mrs. Moon, Thomas Moon's mom, and George Kwon's mother. And I guess Isaiah Shon's mother, and this Ken Kwack's grandmother. And this Esther Kang's mother-in-law. They all sold whatever we had, like canned goods. And more on the vegetable side. And you know, like Mrs. Kwon, I know her very well, very good friends of ours. She had the grocery store before the war, because when the war broke out, she had her son, Bill Kwon, who is the sports editor, at our house. He was ill. So during the wartime, he stayed with us a few months or so. That's right. She had the store and she would go early in the morning. She told me, real early in the morning. And she didn't have a car. I don't think she had a car at that time. She would just go with her cart to River Street and bring the vegetables, if I'm not mistaken. So that's how they did. They didn't have somebody to deliver their vegetables to you.

MK: She sure worked hard.

AC: She really worked hard, yeah. They all worked hard over there, during those times. In fact, they were the, I guess, better-off people because they could afford to buy a business.

MK: Another thing you mentioned was—you know, you mentioned that there were some Filipinos living nearby and then you also mentioned like the Fukudas and some other Japanese now. Were these other ethnic groups kind of separated or—what was it, in terms of ethnic groups, were they placed? Like were there Japanese clusters, you know?

AC: (Yes.)

MK: Or were they all dispersed with everybody else?

AC: No, (the) Fukuda family just happened to be there. But we never were, I guess, as a family, close. They were just living by themselves and we were too. But, I knew Hazel [*Fukuda*] because she was little older than I was, I



knew the sisters, but everybody was doing their own thing. And just next to the Saffery home, going down towards King Street, there was a big Japanese camp [cluster of homes occupied by Japanese]. When you drive into that area, they had a big area in there and then homes around. They even had a bathhouse in there. And talking about the bathhouse, there was a—that's right, there was a bathhouse on King Street, you know, close to that drugstore [*Machida Drugstore, 528 North King Street*] there. Oh, in fact, there was another drugstore coming up toward Pua Lane (called Takaki Sanyo-Do). He relocated.

MK: That would be Takaki Sanyo-Do?

AC: Oh, Takaki Sanyo-Do, yes.

So anyway, they had this bathhouse there, and you know, in those days, my mother was very anti-Japanese. The other ladies and the other girls (were) going to go bath. So I told my mother, "Let's go."

Once in a while, she'll go and then I'll go with her. But she never wanted me to go more than necessary, I guess. Once in a while, she'd go, hardly. So when I went a few times, I remember, was fun. They had the bathhouse divided in two—ladies, one side on the right, the men on the left. And I noticed right in between the partition, there was this cement, square cement, (with) cold water running. In between the partition, (was) that thing. And then the pipe on one side, and ours one side, but you cannot see the other side, because it's men, only the water running. Against the wall, as you enter, there's this big cement tub. So everybody would get (a) basin, it's an aluminum basin. You pick up the basin and then you wash yourself outside and rinse. After (this prewash) you can go into the (hot) tub. The next time I ever had that kind of experience was when I went to Korea. We'll talk about that later. (Laughs)

MK: And so, you know, you had Japanese—there were Japanese camps . . .

AC: Yes.

MK: . . . within Palama. And, you know, you mentioned that at that time, your mom was a little prejudiced against Japanese.

AC: Right.

MK: Now, how was it—how would you characterize the relationships between the Koreans in Palama and the Japanese in Palama?

AC: I don't know that we had any kind of interaction that much, you know. Even with the neighbor next door. (We) hardly (knew) them.

(There were) some Chinese living across the street (in) a complex (of) apartment(s). (It) was an L-shape (two-story) apartment (with) another

separate home in the front. (Next to) the corner of that jog of Pua Lane, there was another Chinese family, and they were related (to the owners of the apartments). Most of (the apartment dwellers) were Chinese. I knew only (three) Korean (families) who lived there at one time or another). I don't know what year it was but (there was) a fire (that burned the) L-shaped apartment, upstairs and downstairs. (An) old Korean man, (a) postman's father, was burned. I think (he) died as a result of that (fire). (At one time) the Chung family (lived) there, Molly (and Johnny). (Another family who lived there was the Grace, Bessie, Kenneth and John Kim family.)

MK: I know you mentioned earlier that there were also Filipinos.

AC: (Yes.)

MK: And you used to listen to their music.

AC: (Yes.)

MK: Were they all bachelors or with families?

AC: I think most of them were bachelors. I don't remember seeing any women. And they all lived together. We just (greeted them) as a young kid, we never spoke to them (at length). (In) that complex behind the store, as you come into the lane, we had some Koreans living (there). (Family of Kee Soon Choi) and Moses Chung and his mother.

MK: And how about part-Hawaiians?

AC: (Yes.) We had Hawaiians and Portuguese in that complex (and) further in this road. A real mixed group (lived) over there. The only Korean living in there was the lady who bought me the *udon* when I was ill.

MK: And then, yeah, still kind of backtracking a little, I remember you were mentioning that for the Korean community, churches were very important. What church did you attend?

AC: (I always attended the Korean Christian Church which is now located) on Liliha Street. Our church on Liliha was built (around) '37, a brand-new church right (above) Kuakini (Street). Prior to that time, we had (a) church where the (Korean) Care Home is now (located) at 1526 Liliha Street, (diagonally across McDonald's on Liliha Street). (It is) located in a lane. (The old church complex contained) an apartment building two stories (high for four families and a low rise for bachelors). (The church was) a long wooden building (with a small space) downstairs (which they) used (for the) Korean-language school (and) Sunday school. When (the church) bought that new property, (all the buildings were demolished and) they built the Korean Care Home. (Actually, all the buildings were on that portion of the property condemned by the state [of Hawai`i] for the building of H-1 Freeway.)

MK: And let's see, shall I stop here, and then when I come back, I'll pick up with church activities . . .

AC: Okay.

MK: . . . things that you remember, yeah.

AC: Okay. (Chuckles)

MK: Stop here.

END OF INTERVIEW